

**How Do You Pray For Your Problems**  
**Prayer Can Change Your Life (Part 3A)**  
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In this series on prayer and how it can change your life, we've been talking about the conditions for answered prayer. One of them is faith. We must have faith that God will answer our prayer. Where do we get that faith when we're in the midst of a situation that seems impossible? Romans 10:17 tells us. ***"Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."*** In other words, the more you get into the Word of God, the more your faith can develop. Those who have little faith are people who have spent little time in God's Word. God's Word builds up our faith. God speaks to us through his Word. If we lack faith we won't have the confidence we need to pray and if we don't pray, we won't receive the blessings that could be ours. We need to learn how to pray for our problems. That's what we'll be looking at today - how do we pray for our problems? We all have problems - every person in this room has problems. God wants us to bring our problems to him and seek his help.

The **key** to answered prayer are the **promises** of God found in God's Word. There are over 7,000 promises in the Bible. There is a promise for every problem that you could ever have. **When you have a problem, you need to find that promise in the Bible and use it as you pray.** The more you do this the more powerful your prayers will be. The more effective your prayers will be.

John 14:14 says, ***"You may ask me for anything in my name and I will do it."*** This doesn't always work, though, does it? We pray for something in Jesus' name, but we don't always get what we prayed for.

In Jeremiah 33:3 we read the promise, ***"Call unto me and I will answer you and show you mighty things which you know not."*** I don't know about you, but I've called out to God and He hasn't always answered me. Sometimes He doesn't show me anything. Sometimes this promise is not mine to claim. We can't automatically claim a promise in the Bible, a promise that was originally given to someone else, **without** the Holy Spirit giving it to us personally.

**God speaks His word in two different ways.** The **first** way God speaks is in a **universal** way. That is when He gives a message to all people everywhere regardless of time or circumstances. If you repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ you will be saved. That is a message to all people everywhere throughout all of time. The **second** way God speaks to people is in a **personal** way. He speaks a specific message to a specific person at a specific time in their life.

In the New Testament, which was originally written in Greek, we find two different Greek words for the word **"word"**. These two words are ***logos*** and ***rama***. Whenever you read the

phrase "*word of God*" or "*word of Christ*", sometimes it is referring to the *logos* of God and sometimes it is referring to the *rama* of God. The *logos* is the word of God to everyone. It is the universal message of God. It is sent by God for everybody to receive. When Jesus calls the Scriptures "*the word of God*" using the word *logos* in referring to God's universal message to all people everywhere throughout all of time. The *Rama* of God is a specific promise from God for a specific person at a specific time and for a specific circumstance.

Let me give you an example of a *rama*. God came to Sara, Abraham's wife and said, "Sarah, you're going to have a baby." There's nothing unusual about that except Sarah was 90 years old. Abraham was 99 years old. This promise was for Sarah and Abraham, not the whole nation of Israel. It was a specific *rama* - a specific promise to Sarah and Abraham. It was not to everybody. If you're a woman sitting here you don't have to worry about getting pregnant at 90 years old. It's not a promise to you. But a promise to someone else could become a promise to you if, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God chose to make it so.

How does that work? Jesus says in John 15:7, "*If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.*" He uses the word *rama* for "*my words*." He's saying if you continue in his personal word to you, then you can ask anything in His name and receive it. Why? - Because He will reveal His promise to you so you can claim it. Take Peter for example. He saw Jesus walking on the water and he said, "*Lord, if it's really you, let me come to you on the water.*" Jesus gave Peter a *rama*. He said, "*Peter, come.*" Notice no one else was eager to get out of the boat, only Peter. It was a specific word to Peter - a *rama* for Peter, not intended for anyone else. It wasn't a universal word to all people. The next day Peter didn't say, "*Okay, guys, we're going fishing and we're not using the boat today. We're just going to walk on the water.*" No. It was a word to Peter for a specific situation and time.

We get into trouble when we take a general statement and we try to claim it without the Holy Spirit telling us to claim it. Satan tried to get Jesus to make this mistake. He said to Jesus, "*Throw yourself down from this temple and God will take care of you.*" God will take care of you is true as a general statement. God will take care of you. But Jesus knew it was not something he could claim for that at that specific time for that specific circumstance. The Holy Spirit led Jesus not to try and claim that promise in that particular way at that particular time.

The question becomes, how do we get God to speak to us a *personally*? How does a promise in the Bible become a promise to us personally?

Jesus says in John 14:26, "*The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" Here Jesus is giving the Holy Spirit's job description. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to teach us and remind us. And there's one more thing. Jesus says in John 16:13, "*When He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.*" Do you hear what Jesus is saying? It's the job of the Holy Spirit to take God's Word and have it apply to our lives in a dynamic way. He takes the *logos* (the general word of God) and he turns it into a *rama* (a specific promise for a specific circumstance) that you can claim personally. This is the process of illumination. The Holy Spirit sheds light on a passage and enables us to see the promise and claim it as a specific message to us for a specific situation. This isn't something new that I'm talking about. It's so much a part of our theological tradition as Presbyterians. We pray a prayer of illumination before the Scriptures are read and the sermon is preached. What we're praying for is that God would speak to us individually as we corporately hear God's Word read and proclaimed.

Have you ever had the experience of listening to a pastor give a sermon and suddenly you feel that God is speaking directly to you through that sermon? That's the process of illumination. That's when God's general word becomes personal to you for your particular set of circumstances at that particular time in your life. That's what we are to pray for every time we listen to God's word read and proclaimed. Illumination is taking place every time you hear something and you feel it was meant just for you. It's when you hear a message and you wonder how the pastor knew you were having that problem or that struggle. That's illumination - the Holy Spirit teaching, reminding and guiding you individually by turning God's general message or promise into a specific message or promise for you.

When I'm preaching and that happens for someone, I'd really like to be able to claim the credit it. When someone comes up to me after the service and says, "Pastor, you spoke right to my heart," I'd like to think it was because of my superior knowledge of human behavior or my outstanding ability as a preacher. But I know better. I know it's the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart and that God could use even the most boring preacher to work in a person's heart. It's my job to stand up here and faithfully proclaim the *logos* - the general word of God. It's the Holy Spirit's job to take that *logos* and make it a personal word to you - a *rama*. And it's your job to be open to receiving that personal message to you.

I was listening to a Christian news report the other day and it announced the latest research on the people group around the world that is most resistant to the gospel today. I thought for sure the report would say it was the Muslims, but it wasn't. Do you know what group of people is most resistant to the gospel around the world today? You don't have to go very far to find them. The most resistant group of people to hearing God speak to them personally is church people. Isn't that tragic? People sitting in church week after week after

week are the most resistant to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives - teaching, reminding and guiding them. Church people are the most resistant people to hearing God speak to them personally.

I get really sad when I hear about people who don't go to church anymore because they don't get anything out of it. I get really sad, not because it's a reflection on me or a reflection on the church, but because it is a reflection on that person's resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. It's not my job to take the *logos* and transform it into a *rama* for you. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. My job as a minister is to faithfully proclaim the word of God and it is the Holy Spirit's job to transform that general word into a personal word to you. And guess what? It's your job to open your hearts to the Holy Spirit and listen for God to speak to you personally.

You may hear a message you've heard before, but the Holy Spirit can open your eyes to see how it applies to your life right now - today - this very moment. When that happens, it's a *rama* from God. God takes a general message to everybody and applies it to you. He can also take a specific message to someone in the Bible and apply it to you. That's a *rama*. The Holy Spirit illuminated the *logos* and you got a *rama*. The Holy Spirit takes the *logos* and applied it to your specific situation at a specific moment in your life and you have a *rama*. And you take God's word to you personally and you use it as you pray for your problem.

Have you ever had a problem and you are worrying about it and all of the sudden you remember something that was said in a sermon 3 months ago? That's a *rama*. Grab a hold of that thought and pray! Claim that promise and you'll see answers to your prayers. When you hear a sermon and you say, wow, God spoke to me exactly what I needed to hear. That's a *rama*. It's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. That's the way the Holy Spirit works. The Holy Spirit takes the general word of God and makes it come alive in you.

Let me give you an illustration. If I were to tell you all that I love you, that would be true. I do. I love the people God has given me to shepherd. Now my husband is sitting in the back pew and he just heard me tell you all of you that I love you. But that didn't do much for him because he expects and needs something much more personal from me than a general I love you. But if I was to go over to him and put my arm around his neck and gently say, "Paul, I love you", I'd get a much different response from him. A general message to everyone just became a personal message and promise to him.

When we experience God speaking a specific word to us, we then have a promise to claim as we pray. And that is the secret to answered prayer.

That's what happens when we become a Christian for the first time. That's what takes place when we hear God calling us into a personal relationship with Him through Christ. How many times did you hear the message that God loves you before you gave your life to Christ? I know I must have heard it a hundred times as I was growing up, but it took the Holy Spirit transforming that general message into a personal message for me before I surrendered my life to Christ. Until that experience, it was like water off a ducks back when I heard those words - God loves you. But one day, all of a sudden, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I realized that God loved me personally. At that moment I realized that God loved me, despite all my hang-ups and problems and bad habits and fears and unresolved stuff, I was loved by God. It changed my life. I was born again. What happened? The "logos" of God became a *rama* of God that I could claim as I prayed for the miracle - as I prayed for Christ to come into my heart and make His home. The general message of God in the verse, "***Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in,***" became very personal to me and I claimed it as a promise to me and I prayed for Christ to come into my heart and He did, and my life has never been the same.

One of the results of getting a personal message from God is it builds tremendous faith in our lives. Faith comes by hearing the *rama* of God, not simply by hearing the *logos* of God. And it happens when we hear God's word with an open heart. It happens when you're reading a passage in the Bible, a passage you've maybe read a hundred times before, and all the sudden a verse jumps out at you with new meaning. Then at the end of the day you look back and you see how that verse was exactly what you needed to get you through the day. That's a *rama* and that's what we need to use as we pray for our problems.